

U.S. Is Believed Losing Control Over Its Policy of Isolating Cuba

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WASHINGTON, July 12—The Nixon Administration has lost control of the United States policy of maintaining a political and economic quarantine against Cuba, in the opinion of Government officials specializing in Latin-American affairs.

Pat M. Holt, the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who met with Premier Fidel Castro in Havana Saturday, is also understood to believe that Mr. Castro and others in Latin America have begun to determine the pace and direction of Cuba's breakout from hemisphere isolation. This view is

reportedly shared by a growing number of Latin - American governments.

Mr. Holt, who began his Cuba trip June 28, had been trying to get State Department authorization for the visit since 1966. He finally received it last Dec. 7 from Secretary of State Kissinger.

The meetings Mr. Holt had with Mr. Castro and other Cuban leaders — including Blas Roca, a member of the governing Communist party's secretariat, and Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, First Deputy Premier — are being viewed here and in

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of Policy of Isolating Cuba

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Latin America as an important signal, perhaps even a breakthrough.

The course of United States policy isolated Cuba began in January, 1961, when the Eisenhower Administration broke diplomatic ties with Havana over what it considers provocations by the Castro Government. A year later the Organization of American States voted to "exclude Cuba from the inter-American system." Washington followed up in February, 1962, with a trade embargo against Cuba and in March denied entry to products of Cuban origin.

In July, 1964, the organization of American States, following Washington's policy, voted that member states should break diplomatic and trade ties with Cuba. All but Mexico complied.

"All kinds of things are happening on the Cuba front," the Administration official observed, "and the Administration is on the defensive."

Among the "things happening" official noted, was the exclusion of Cuba among the Latin American countries attending the International Law of the Sea Conference in Caracas.

In addition, Mexico's President, Luis Echeverría Alvarez, is begun a tour of seven Latin American countries, partly with the idea of pleading Cuba's case.

Mexico has always maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba. Lately Peru, Argentina and four Caribbean countries have opened embassies in Cuba.

Among other countries, Mr. Echeverría is visiting Costa Rica, Ecuador and Venezuela, which are believed to be poised to open full-scale relations with Cuba. Panama and Colombia are in that group, too, United States officials believe, and are



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Pat M. Holt of Foreign Relations Committee staff in Washington yesterday. He conferred with officials in Cuba for 10 days.

soon to be joined by Guatemala and Honduras.

"There is a stampede effect at the moment," one Washington official said. "Even Chile is reconsidering its stance toward Cuba. The Latins are petrified at not being on the bandwagon. Now, instead of being the bad boy on the block as in the sixties, there is a turnabout and they are coming to Castro."

Mr. Echeverría has stated in recent news conferences that one of the aims of his Latin American tour is to persuade

other hemisphere governments to "lift the blockade against Cuba" that the O.A.S. adopted in 1964.

Administration policy toward Cuba remains "unchanged," according to the latest official statements. That policy was made clear also in a letter Mr. Kissinger wrote in December to Senator J.W. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, concerning Mr. Holt's request for permission to go to Havana.

Mr. Kissinger said that the State Department agreed "reluctantly" to validate Mr. Holt's passport after setting out "our continuing assessment that it is important to our national interest and the security of the hemisphere to seek the isolation of Cuba in cooperation with other American republics."

In the opinion of several United States officials specializing in Cuban affairs, the turnabout in hemisphere politics has resulted from factors entirely outside Washington's influence.

These, they said, included: Mr. Castro's apparent desire to be less dependent on the Soviet Union, which provides Cuba with over \$1-million a day in assistance and has some 7,000 civilian advisers on the island, in addition to military advisers.

What appears to be the virtual cessation of efforts by Cubans to help overthrow right-wing Latin-American governments, except in Chile.

The determination of a growing number of Latin-American governments to decide their own foreign policies, particularly with regard to Cuba. In this connection Argentina's decision to export motor vehicles manufactured by U.S. automobile company subsidiaries to Cuba forced the Nixon Administration last spring to license those sales, undercutting the embargo policies.

The Castro Government's decision to conduct its hemispheric relations in traditional diplomatic channels rather than by encouraging revolution.

"Castro is in the catbird seat at last," said a United States analyst of Cuban affairs. He says he'll talk to Holt and he does. He says he'll talk to Kissinger if the blockade is lifted and it makes us look naked."

This official said he be-

lieved the Nixon Administration would soon face some critical decisions on the Cuba question.

"Cuba may be the rock on which the Organization of American States founders," he said. "And the Administration will also be faced with the decision whether it is better to have Castro supreme in Cuba or the Soviet Union supreme in Cuba."

Another Administration official said he could imagine a situation in which virtually all Latin American governments except Paraguay lifted the economic boycott of Cuba, leaving only the United States continuing it. He added that, to the degree the United States ignores Latin America, the Latin Americans would cultivate relations with Cuba as a lever against the United States.

A Change in Situation

"The question is whether the policy of economic denial toward Cuba has led to the isolation of the United States rather than Cuba," he said.

Since last year, when the United States negotiated an agreement with Cuba to prosecute or return plane hijackers, the Nixon Administration has made modest efforts to prevent the Cuban issue from blocking the development of relations with other Latin American lands.

In April Secretary Kissinger acceded to the wish of many Latin American foreign ministers to explore the possibility of including Cuba in his "new hemisphere dialogue." The Administration still opposes Cuban participation, but it does not want to offend the Latins by saying so directly.